

HOUSE RESOLUTION 108
By Campfield

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Gertrude Sheets of
Jefferson County.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Gertrude Sheets; and

WHEREAS, the granddaughter of Jane and Lonas Dirl, slaves who escaped bondage in Raleigh, North Carolina and fled to East Tennessee, Gertrude Sheets was born on May 11, 1896 in Jefferson County, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, shortly after Gertrude Sheets' birth, the United States Supreme Court handed down its ruling in Plessy vs. Ferguson which gave birth to Jim Crow laws; and

WHEREAS, living through many changes and advances for African-Americans in this country, Gertrude Sheets fearlessly fought against racial discrimination and social injustice; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sheets lived through many historic and famous events for African-American equality such as Brown vs. Board of Education and President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, married in Sweetwater in 1922, John and Gertrude Sheets shared many years of wedded bliss until his passing in 1951; and

WHEREAS, evincing great patriotism and astute service to her country, Mrs. Sheets worked as a housemother in military dormitories that housed workers involved with the Manhattan Project; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her dutiful service during World War II, Gertrude Sheets received a gold pin and citation from President Harry S. Truman; and

WHEREAS, Gertrude Sheets served with acumen and alacrity as a cook and custodian at Carson-Newman College where she earned the respect of her peers and superiors alike for the exemplary quality of her work; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sheets was also deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, despite only graduating from the 8th grade, Gertrude Sheets emphasized the importance of education to her children; and

WHEREAS, serving as a testament to her ability as a mother, Gertrude Sheets was the mother of the first African-American to teach at Carson-Newman College, and she was the grandmother of the first African-American to graduate from Carson-Newman College; and

WHEREAS, Gertrude Sheets was preceded in death by her husband, John Sheets, Jr.; she is survived by her children, Thomas and Barbara Sheets, Susan and Eddie Smith, Virginia and Roy Gwynn, James and Elaine Sheets, Mary and Harry Phipps, and Gladys and George Clay; seventeen grandchildren; thirty great-grandchildren; twenty-four great-great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Marion Dirl; many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends; and

WHEREAS, Gertrude Sheets was an active and devout member of the Martha Davis Baptist Church, which she served faithfully for many years; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sheets was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Gertrude Sheets leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of Gertrude Sheets, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mrs. Sheets.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.